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CONTACT: HELAINE KLASKY  
AMY STILWELL  
(202) 395-3230**

**The United States Applauds Progress at the First Trade and Investment  
Framework Agreement Council Meeting with South Africa**

Today United States Trade Representative Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky and South Africa Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin co-chaired, by video-conference, the first US-South Africa Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting.

Ambassador Barshefsky stated, "Today's meeting, our first trade discussion with the new government of South Africa under the TIFA, was very productive. I am particularly pleased with the progress made on our nations' cooperative work in the WTO, pending intellectual property issues and our on-going efforts to enhance trade and investment linkages. The United States and South Africa share many common goals. I look forward to continued progress on our bilateral trade agenda."

The US and South Africa identified a number of areas of possible cooperation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial and the new negotiating round, including agriculture, services, e-commerce and institutional reform. The U.S. will host the next WTO Ministerial in Seattle in November. The US intends to work closely with South Africa and other African nations to ensure that the new WTO round benefits all WTO members.

Ambassador Barshefsky and Minister Erwin had a friendly and constructive dialogue on a range of intellectual property protection topics including several related to pharmaceuticals. Ambassador Barshefsky underscored the U.S.'s strong support and appreciation of South Africa's efforts to provide affordable healthcare for its people. She emphasized that there should be no conflict between intellectual property protection, sound public health and access to affordable drugs.

U.S. and South African officials also discussed mechanisms to enhance US-South Africa trade -- which totaled approximately \$7 billion in 1998. The agenda also included investment issues. The US is the largest source of foreign direct investment in post-apartheid South Africa.

The US-South Africa Trade and Investment Council was created in the bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, concluded in February 1999.